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As Time Runs Out
Are We on the Road to Apocalypse?

“It’s 1938 and Iran is Germany. And Iran is racing to arm itself with atomic bombs. Believe him and stop him... This is what we must do. Everything else pales before this.”

Benjamin Netanyahu

“Imagine that you wake up tomorrow morning and discover that during the night, Israeli planes had conducted a bombing raid on Iran. How would your world have changed?”

Gary Sick, CNN.com

Authors Yaakov Katz and Yoaz Hendel set the scene for what we might see unfold in the near future:
The briefing room will be packed when the prime minister takes his position at the podium and asks everyone to sit down. As the young pilots stare up at their nation's leader, the prime minister will gaze right into their eyes, searching for one more confirmation that he has made the right decision.

While clearly nervous, the pilots are ready. They have been prepared for this day for the past few years, some of them from the beginning of their Israel Defense Force service. The prime minister does not have much to say.

“This is a historic day for our small nation,” he will announce. “Some seventy years ago Nazi Germany tried to destroy our people, but we survived and succeeded in establishing the State of Israel. It is now up to you to ensure that we will continue to survive and live here.”

Then the rabbi for the Israeli Air Force will stand up at the podium, and all of the pilots will cover their heads. Together they will say the Traveler’s Prayer, a short plea to God written at the time of the Talmud, to ask that they make it to their destination and return safely.

At once, the pilots stand and salute the prime minister, the defense minister, and IAF commander. Minutes later, they climb inside their aircraft and begin lining them up along the runway.

The prime minister had actually made up his mind to attack Iran several months earlier but had waited, hoping to coordinate the operation
with the White House. While the president tried to persuade Israel to back down and even threatened to cut military aid, the Israeli leader explained that he was not asking for permission. Instead, the prime minister asserted, he was doing what allies do and informing the president of his government’s decision ahead of time. The Israeli cabinet had spoken: Iran’s nuclear program had to be stopped.³

One thing is clear. If Israel launches a preemptive strike against Iran’s nuclear sites, things will never be the same. Not for Israel. Not for the Middle East. Not for the world. The attack will trigger a cascade of events that could bring strong retaliation from Iran and its proxies Hezbollah and Hamas, all of whom may pound Israel with rockets and missiles. Israel could find itself fighting fierce onslaughts on the northern front, the southern front, and the home front. Such a war could spark a wider regional conflict, with Iran attacking American forces in the Persian Gulf and Saudi oil fields. The question of what America will do is unclear. Some fear that an Israeli preemptive assault could even start World War III.

No one knows the nature and extent of the immediate fallout. There will undoubtedly be many twists and turns. But is it possible that these events are part of a larger drama scripted long ago? Can we know how these events correspond to the pattern of events foretold by the ancient prophets to know where it’s all headed? In the uncertain storm of the days in which we live, we all
yearn to look into the darkness of the future to see what’s ahead—but can we?

**Strike Three?**

Israeli jets thundered across the Iraqi desert on June 7, 1981, shocking the world by taking out an Iraqi nuclear reactor. The mission, code-named “Operation Opera,” was ordered by Prime Minister Menachem Begin to take out the French-built nuclear plant in Osirak, 18 miles south of Baghdad. In this preemptive strike, eight Israeli Air Force (IAF) F-16 fighter jets destroyed the 70-megawatt uranium-powered reactor, dropping sixteen 2000-pound bombs—14 of which made direct hits.

Twenty-six years later, on September 6, 2007, in a daring midnight strike code-named “Operation Orchard,” Israeli warplanes destroyed a secret nuclear reactor in the remote Syrian desert about 20 miles west of Damascus. The world didn’t even know about it until weeks later.

Twice already, in daring preemptive strikes, Israel has taken out the nuclear ambitions of its enemies. Israel has vowed that it will deliver strike three to the Iranian nuclear facilities if the world doesn’t act and Iran fails to stand down in its nuclear aspirations. Israeli General Daniel Halutz was asked back on March 7, 2006, “How far would Israel go to stop Iran’s nuclear program?” He calmly responded, “2000 kilometers.” That’s the distance from Israel to Iran.

What he said in 2006 has not changed. To the contrary, Israeli resolve has hardened. Israel will go to any
lengths to interrupt the Iranian nuclear machine. The Iranian centrifuges are spinning. Iran and Israel are already at war. Open conflict appears inevitable. Jeffrey Goldberg observes, “Netanyahu isn’t bluffing—he is in fact counting down to the day when he will authorize a strike against a half-dozen or more Iranian nuclear sites.” Israel believes that it has the capacity to cause enough damage to set Iran’s nuclear program back by three to five years. The New York Times has envisioned an Israeli surgical strike by 100 planes. Note also this article by D.B. Grady:

No sane person would wish for a unilateral Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities—but nor would a sane person wish for a nuclear Iran… But if intelligence suggested an impending, existential threat to Israel, it’s easy to imagine F-15I fighter jets planting GBU-28 bunker-busters in Iranian nuclear sites from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. And if that happens, the real question becomes, what next?

That’s the question everyone is asking. What’s next? Will there be an Iranian counterstrike? What will it look like? How aggressive and far-reaching will it be? What will Hezbollah and Hamas do? Will the United States be drawn into the fray? Could it trigger a larger regional war? Or even World War III?

War games conducted by the U.S. military in March
2012 concluded that an Israeli strike against Iran “would likely lead to a wider war that could include the U.S.”9 Iran has threatened to target U.S. bases if the U.S. is part of any attack against Iran, saying that American bases in the Middle East are “highly vulnerable” and can be destroyed minutes after the attack.

The U.S. conducted a two-week war game called “Internal Look” that “played out a narrative in which the United States found it was pulled into the conflict after Iranian missiles struck a Navy warship in the Persian Gulf, killing about 200 Americans.”10 In this scenario, the U.S. carried out its own strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. “General Mattis told aides that an Israeli first strike would be likely to have dire consequences across the region and for United States forces there.”11

Israel has also conducted its own war games, and Israel’s war games concluded it could deal a crippling blow to Iran’s nuclear pursuits:

In a simulation war game featuring Israelis in senior positions, Israel loses 10 fighter jets in a strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities and manages to set back the Iranian nuclear program by seven years…According to the game’s premise…four independent and reliable Mossad intelligence sources indicate that Iran has begun transferring its strategic nuclear equipment to underground sites in Qom. Iran sends 1,500 tanks toward the border with Iraq and instructs Hizbullah to fire missiles
at Israel. It also launches a series of large scale
terror actions and fires missiles from Lebanon
and from its own territory at hi-tech targets in
Herzliya, succeeding in destroying Intel’s head-
quartes. A suicide bomber kills a large number
of cadets in the IDF’s hi-tech Talpiyot program.
Low-level radiation is released in Tel Aviv by a
“dirty bomb.” In the war game, Israeli media
shows surprising solidarity and unity on the day
of the attack, initially sparing the government
from criticism…

Iran decides to try and drive a wedge between
Israel and the U.S. It therefore tells the U.S. it
will supply it with as much oil as it needs…its
agents blow up a car bomb in Tel Aviv and fire
a missile at an El Al jet from a ship in the Medi-
terranean, killing 300 people. Meanwhile, intel-
ligence indicates that Iran’s nuclear program has
been set back 7 years by the Israeli strikes.12

How close this simulation is to what really hap-
pens remains to be seen. Reports of a secret agreement
between Azerbaijan in Central Asia and Israel came to
light in the spring of 2012. According to these leaks, the
Azeri government has granted Israel access to eight air
bases located just 200 miles north of Iran which would
allow Israel to land and refuel fighters and bombers in
very close proximity to its targets.13 The world views this
as one more signal that Israel and Iran are one step closer
to war and that simulation will give way to realization.
Once the dominos begin to fall, all bets are off. But it’s clear that Iran’s fury and revenge will be targeted against Israel, which it calls the “little Satan,” and the U.S., which was dubbed the “great Satan” in 1979.

**Israel and the U.S. in the Crosshairs**

The mullah regime in Iran, according to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, poses an “existential threat” to Jewish people and their homeland. Iranian leaders continue to spew out venom against Israel that openly unmasks their evil intentions. Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has referred to Israel as a “cancerous tumor that should be cut and will be cut.” Several Iranian defectors have made it clear that Khamenei is directly involved in the nuclear program. He makes the final decisions. Scientists who have defected from Iran have given differing measures of the state of Iran’s nuclear development, but “they were all clear about Iran’s true intentions, however: the Islamic Republic was developing the bomb so it could one day attack Israel.”

Alireza Forghani, a strategy specialist and staunch supporter of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has released a detailed military plan to annihilate Israel, which he claims can be accomplished in less than nine minutes using Iranian missiles. He maintains that “Tehran is capable of annihilating Israel within less than nine minutes using its arsenal of missiles and by deploying operational combat units throughout the world.” He says that Iran will hit targets inside Israel, including
nuclear facilities, air force bases, and civilian infrastructure. Ayatollah Khamenei has warned of a “lightning response” to any preemptive attack by Israel. He said, “Should they take any wrong step, any inappropriate move, it will fall on their heads like lightning.”

But Israel is not alone as the focus of Iranian malice. For the Iranian regime, the U.S. is part of its plan for annihilation. Ayatollah Khamenei stated, “In light of the realization of the divine promise by almighty God, the Zionists and the Great Satan [America] will soon be defeated.” Some Israeli officials claim that Iran is working to develop a long-range missile capable of reaching the United States. Americans believe the threat posed by Iran is great. A CNN poll found that fear of Iran in the U.S. “has surpassed fear of the Soviet Union during one of the Cold War’s most dangerous years.” The poll revealed that 81 percent of Americans believe Iran is a “very serious” or “moderately serious” threat, with 48 percent calling it “very serious.” Eighty-four percent of Americans believe Iran is developing nuclear weapons, and 71 percent believe they already have the bomb.

Despite repeated, drawn-out diplomatic efforts and rounds and rounds of sanctions, Iran has steadfastly clung to its right to a nuclear program that the entire world knows is focused on developing the bomb. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has said, “The train of the Iranian nation is without brakes and a rear gear… We dismantled the reverse gear and brakes of the train and threw them away some time ago.” He also said, “Nuclear energy is our right, and we will resist until
this right is fully realized.” As Ehud Barak notes, “This is not about some abstract concept, but a genuine concern. The Iranians are, after all, a nation whose leaders have set themselves a strategic goal of wiping Israel off the map.” Barak has repeatedly warned that time is “urgently running out.” 22 It seems to have already run out. The drums of war are pounding. Zero hour has arrived. Israel will unleash a unilateral, preemptive strike to diminish Iran’s nuclear charge.

The Israel vs. Iran showdown has given rise to a new measure of the probability that the U.S. or Israel will strike Iran. It’s sponsored by The Atlantic and is called the “Iran War Dial.”

The Dial is set by a panel of esteemed experts who periodically predict the odds of conflict. Each panelist predicts the percentage chance of war, and then the scores are averaged to come up with the chance of war, thus, the “Iran War Dial.” 23 The hands on the Dial may be near midnight. The moment of truth has arrived.

“STRAIT” TALK ABOUT OIL AND GLOBAL RECESSION

One nightmare consequence of war with Iran is the threat of major disruption of oil supplies. Iran has threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz and shut off the spigot of Persian Gulf oil. Parviz Sarvari, a member of the Iranian Parliament’s National Security Committee, said, “Soon we will hold a military maneuver on how to close the Strait of Hormuz. If the world wants to make the region insecure, we will make the world insecure.” 24
The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow strait, and it’s the only sea passage to the open ocean for the Persian Gulf nations. The strait is located between Iran and the United Arab Emirates. It’s 21 miles wide at its narrowest point, but it has only two one-mile wide channels for sea traffic. These two travel channels are separated by a two-mile buffer zone.

About 17 million barrels of oil a day navigate their way through the Strait of Hormuz. This represents about 20 percent of the world’s total daily oil supply and about 40 percent of the world’s seaborne oil trade. Supplies from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, and Iran must pass through this narrow strait. Remember that these four nations have almost two-thirds of the world’s proven oil reserves. And the oil that travels through that narrow waterway represents almost all of the world’s spare capacity.

This means that Iran is the daily gatekeeper for 20 percent of the world’s daily oil supply. Iran overlooks the strategic world oil chokepoint on the Strait of Hormuz. Experts believe that Iran already has a strategic plan in place to execute suicide attacks on U.S. military vessels in the Persian Gulf. Iran’s elite Revolutionary Guards have conducted war games in the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian ships in the strait are being equipped with shorter-range missiles.

Also, the narrow strait could easily be shut down simply by the placement of a few sea mines in the narrow lanes. Iran currently possesses EM-53 bottom-tethered mines that it purchased from China in the 1990s. The navy says that it could take months to locate and remove these
mines. And just think what would happen if Iran sunk a couple of full oil supertankers in the strait. It would be disastrous. The environmental effects would be far-reaching, and oil prices would skyrocket overnight. With 20 percent of the world’s oil supply cut off indefinitely, the already shaky world economy could plunge into the financial abyss. Global recession would inevitably result. The fear alone of an Israeli attack on Iran raised the price for a gallon of gas by at least 25 cents according to experts. Prices would soar in the event of an actual attack. On average, 14 crude oil tankers pass through the strait each day, carrying an estimated 17 million barrels, more than a third of the world’s seaborne oil shipments.  

A study of nearly 800 institutional investors conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit found the primary risk to the global economic recovery is the threat of an oil price spike, which is primarily linked to tensions over Iran’s nuclear program.

One article puts it this way:

Assuming a military confrontation between Iran, Israel and the U.S.—specifically, an attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities—does take place, the EIU forecasts a “severe oil price spike amounting to a 30-50 percent jump in prices in a matter of days or weeks, halting the global economic recovery and threatening another recession.”
The U.S. has clearly said that any attempt by Iran to close the strait or lay mines is an “act of war,” according to Vice Admiral Mark Fox. Based on Iranian threats of retaliatory actions, the United States has “deployed a second aircraft carrier task force in the Arabian Sea close to the Straits and doubled the number of minesweepers based inside the Persian Gulf at Bahrain from four to eight. The U.S. has also fielded an undisclosed number of F-22 Raptor stealth fighters-bombers to a base in the same general area.” The U.S. Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain. Preparations must be carefully made for any and every eventuality if and when Israel launches a preemptive strike.

It Will Be Much Harder This Time

The Israeli success in destroying the nuclear facilities in Iraq and Syria will be much more difficult, if not impossible, to replicate. Iran is a nation of about 80 million people inhabiting 1.65 million square kilometers and the nuclear targets in Iran are 1000 miles from Israel. It is the eighteenth largest country in the world in size, and the seventeenth largest in population.

Also, Iran’s nuclear program is not concentrated in one location or even one facility. It’s spread out in seven places.

Iran’s Seven Key Nuclear Facilities

Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant

This Russian-built nuclear reactor began producing electricity in 2010.
Arak Heavy Water Reactor
This is still under construction, but it will eventually produce weapons-grade plutonium.

Natanz Enrichment Facility
As Iran’s main enrichment center, it is located partly underground, and it can hold up to 50,000 centrifuges and currently has almost 10,000 spinning.

Isfahan Nuclear Technology Center
Built in 2006, it converts yellowcake to uranium hexafluoride.

Tehran Nuclear Research Center
This center is made up of labs where nuclear research is conducted.

Bandar Abbas Uranium Production Plant
This plant processes uranium ore.

Fordo Uranium Enrichment Plant
Buried 300 feet underneath a mountain next to a military complex, this site was kept secret until it was identified by Western intelligence agencies in September 2009. Iran finally had to acknowledge the existence of the facility at that time. The facility, which is a hardened tunnel, is protected by air defense missiles and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. It can hold up to 3000 centrifuges.
A DAUNTING TASK

Taking out Iran’s nuclear facilities or even stunting their growth for a few years is a daunting task. “The Natanz complex consists of two large halls, roughly 300,000 square feet each, dug somewhere between eight and twenty-three feet below ground and covered with several layers of concrete and metal. The walls of each hall are estimated to be two feet thick.”

At Iran’s Fordo site near Iran’s holy city of Qom, centrifuges are churning out uranium enriched to over 20 percent, which “can be turned into fissile warhead material faster and with less work.” This level of enrichment is not necessary for industrial use. The heavily fortified Fordo facility is buried 300 feet under a mountain, which means that inflicting significant damage will be difficult. Ehud Barak has stated that the facility is “immune to standard bombs.” In spite of the daunting challenges, Israel will be forced to strike and inflict whatever damage possible unless there is some drastic change.

The choice for Israel is quickly narrowing to two options: Either they carry out the bombing, or they suffer the bomb. And both Israel and the United States have said forcefully and repeatedly that they will not allow Iran to get the bomb. According to reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency, Iran is dead set on crossing the nuclear finish line:

Iran has significantly stepped up its output of low-enriched uranium and total production in
the last five years would be enough for at least five nuclear weapons if refined much further…

Iran has produced almost 6.2 tons of uranium enriched to a level of 3.5 percent since it began the work in 2007—some of which has subsequently been further processed into higher-grade material. This is nearly 750 kg more than in the previous IAEA report issued in February, and ISIS said Iran’s monthly production had risen by roughly a third. This total amount of 3.5 percent low enriched uranium hexafluoride, if further enriched to weapon grade, is enough to make over five nuclear weapons.\(^{32}\)

So, barring some unforeseen, unimaginable walk-back by Iran, the only option for Israel is bombing. Michael Oren, Israeli Ambassador to the U.S., framed the issue succinctly: “America, a big country, has a big window, looks out that window and sees the Middle East far away; Israel, a small country with a very small window, we look out that window and we see Iran in our backyard.”\(^{33}\)

That’s the issue. A nuclear Iran is not an option for Israel.

If Iran goes nuclear, it could transfer a nuclear device to one of its terrorist proxies to be detonated in Israel or the United States. A nuclear Iran would also trigger a nuclear arms race in the world’s most volatile region. As Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak says, “The moment Iran goes nuclear, other countries in the region will feel compelled to do the same. The Saudi Arabians have told the Americans as much, and one can think of both
Turkey and Egypt in this context, not to mention the danger that weapons-grade materials will leak out to terror groups.” Henry Kissinger also sounds the alarm about Iran’s drive to the nuclear finish line: “If Iran is allowed to produce nuclear weapons, the genie will be out of the bottle, and the whole world will be in grave danger.” Imagine terrorist organizations in the Middle East getting their hands on a nuclear weapon or even radioactive material to make a “dirty bomb.” A nuclear-armed Iran will also push the most militant factions within Hezbollah and other Iranian surrogates to step up their aggression and take greater risks.34

The Voice of the Prophets

Of course, all the recent developments with Israel and Iran present formidable economic, political, and military challenges for the U.S., Israel, and other Western nations. A great deal of diplomatic capital has been expended. There are no easy solutions. Confrontation looms.

But could the rise of Iran and its stance toward Israel have even greater significance? Could events we are witnessing today be preparing the way for the fulfillment of Bible prophecy? Only God knows for sure, but many signs point in that direction. As alarming as current events are in the Middle East, they shouldn’t be surprising in light of the end-time prophecies of the Bible.

The biblical prophecy in Ezekiel 38–39, written about 2600 years ago, tells us that a great horde of nations will invade Israel in the last days while Israel is at rest in her
own land. The leader of this invasion will apparently be Russia, and one of the main allies in this confederation of nations, according to Ezekiel 38:5, is Persia—the modern nation of Iran. Russia has risen to world prominence in the last century, and it has experienced a great resurgence in the last decade. Iran is now world public enemy number one and an avowed anti-Semitic state, which has pledged to “wipe Israel off the map.”

I want to be clear that I don’t believe the current crisis in Iran and the Middle East is the direct fulfillment of any biblical prophecy. However, it is an ominous development that strikingly foreshadows what the Bible predicts. It is a significant signpost that I believe points toward the fulfillment of the great prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39. In the surging events in the Middle East, we can hear the pounding of prophetic hoofbeats.

Israel’s strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities will probably unleash a vicious backlash. Dominos will begin to fall. No one knows for sure how they will fall, or how many will fall, but we know some will fall. We also know that some consequences will develop immediately, while others may slowly smolder. But one thing is clear: Ahmadinejad and the Iranian mullahs already harbor a devilish hatred for the U.S. and Israel. Just think how they would go off if Israel stalled their nuclear program. Any military action by the U.S. or Israel (or both) against Iran would undoubtedly plant seeds of vengeful animosity in Iran that could later erupt in the fulfillment of the biblical prophecy in Ezekiel 38–39. We may be witnessing the stage-setting for this incredible prophecy right now! The
pieces of Ezekiel’s prophetic puzzle seem to be coming together. It appears that the end-time stage is being set right before our eyes.

**In the Theater of World Events**

The setting of the world stage for future, end-time events can be graphically illustrated by picturing a theater where preparations are made for a production. Suppose a Shakespearean actor enters a theater one evening, not knowing what masterpiece of Shakespeare is to be presented. Before the curtain goes up, he is taken behind the scenes.

On stage is a castle with fortifications looking out over a wooded countryside. At once he knows that he will not see *Othello*, which is set in Venice, nor *Julius Caesar*, which begins with a street scene in Rome. He knows that he will not see *Macbeth*, for even though a castle scene does take place in *Macbeth*, the play opens not with the castle but with witches gathered around their cauldron. Finally, our drama critic notices two soldiers with shields bearing the arms of the king of Denmark. He sees two other actors dressed up as a king and a queen and one actor who is supposed to be a ghost. Now no one has to tell the critic what he will see, for he knows it will be *Hamlet*.

In the same way today, God’s people sit in the theater of world events awaiting the curtain call of God’s apocalyptic drama. We don’t know when the play will begin, but like the drama critic, we know much more about it
than most. Many stare at the future as a huge curtain. For them, the future is veiled—they have no idea of the plan of God. And they can’t see behind the curtain where Act One is being set. But as believers, we see behind the scenes. While it is true that we don’t know the moment when the play will begin, we do know the play itself—the main characters and events—and can sense it beginning as we see the actors starting to take their proper places on the great world stage.  

The Jewish people are back in their ancient homeland after being scattered to 70 countries for almost 2000 years. They are surrounded by a sea of enemies, just as Scripture predicted. Iran has risen to power as both the dominant military power in the Middle East and the world’s largest state sponsor of terror. At the same time, the Russian bear has roared out of hibernation to reassert its influence and lend its support to the Iranian regime. Rolling revolutions in the Arab world have created an uncertain future. The world economy is teetering on the brink of recession or even worse. People everywhere are crying out for peace in the Middle East.

Behind all of this looms the ancient prophecy of Ezekiel 38–39, which predicts that Iran (ancient Persia) will be a key player in the end times and that Iran will join a confederacy of other nations to attack Israel. What we see happening appears to point toward the fulfillment of this great prophecy.

Over twenty years ago, prophecy scholar Dr. John Walvoord noted that the first key to the Armageddon countdown is that “the Middle East must become the
number one crisis in the world.” There’s no doubt that the Middle East is the number one hot spot in the world. That piece of the prophetic puzzle is now firmly in place.

What will happen next? Where’s it all headed? Are there any answers? Can we know the future? What is Russia’s role in the end times? What does the Bible say about the future of the Middle East? Will Iran try to shut off the Strait of Hormuz, causing panic on world oil markets? How high will oil go? What will happen to the world economy? Will Iran attack U.S. ships in the Persian Gulf, drawing the U.S. into another war? Will the Middle East go up in the flames of a regional war? What will Russia do? What are the final events of history? Is there any way to know what the future holds? Is there a word of comfort or a warning of cataclysm?

This is a book about current events, but more particularly, it is about how current events point toward what’s coming in the future. Before we get too deep into the details of what’s transpiring in the Middle East and where it’s all headed, I believe it’s important to get our bearings by understanding the overall prophetic scenario presented in Scripture. To accomplish this, let’s begin with the time we are in today—a time known as the church age—and then progress briefly through a few key end-time events.

**The Current Church Age**

The current time period is known as the church age, when all who come to faith in Jesus Christ are being
formed into one body with the Lord Jesus Christ as the head. As we approach the home stretch of the church age, the Jewish people have been regathered to their land. The reestablishment of the nation of Israel in the Middle East was necessary to start the calendar of end-time events because almost every end-time prophecy hinges on the existence of Israel as a nation. Since its miraculous birth, Israel has been threatened with extinction, yet it has survived in the middle of a sea of enemies.

**The Great Escape**

Someday, maybe very soon, the world will be shocked by the fulfillment of an event called the rapture of the church—the sudden removal of every Christian from the world (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). This next event on God’s prophetic calendar will fulfill the promise of Christ to His disciples when He said, “I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). At that time, Christians who have died will be resurrected, and every true Christian living in the world will be suddenly removed to heaven without experiencing death. Together they will meet the Lord in the air and go with Him back up to heaven to return with Him back to earth at least seven years later at His Second Coming. (Read John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.) The disappearance of millions of Christians will deepen the problems the world is facing today and plunge the world, at least temporarily, into chaos.
The Revival of the Roman Empire and the Rise of Antichrist

Out of the chaos produced by the rapture, a group of ten leaders, or what we might call the “Group of Ten,” will rise from a reunited or revived Roman Empire centered in Europe. The Group of Ten is symbolized by the ten horns of Daniel 7:7 and the similar description of the end-time government in Revelation 13:1. This alliance or confederacy of ten leaders and the nations they represent constitutes a revival of the Roman Empire and the beginning of the final stage of the fourth beast in Daniel 7.

This power bloc will evidently include European countries and possibly nations in western Asia, northern Asia, and Africa. This group of ten leaders will control ten or more of the nations and geographic areas from the ancient Roman Empire. The Group of Ten will rise to power in the aftermath of the rapture because the world will be looking to someone to bring stability and security. This will be temporarily accomplished in a seven-year covenant of peace and protection with Israel that will bring peace to the Middle East.

From the many diplomats, negotiators, and leaders involved in the Middle East, one new international leader will emerge from Europe alongside the Group of Ten to superimpose a peace settlement on Israel and her neighbors. This man who will eventually take control of the revived Roman Empire and eventually the world is known as the Antichrist. His initial victory in international diplomacy will bring an era of false peace, a move
toward disarmament, and a major push for a new world economic system. Without a forced peace, the disruption of the West's oil supply and an escalation in terrorism will threaten to bring Western civilization to its knees. The signing of this peace treaty will begin the final seven-year time of Tribulation.

**THE COMING MIDDLE EAST WAR**

Prophecy indicates that Israel will not be destroyed by war but will eventually be forced to accept an outside settlement at the peace table and be betrayed by the final world ruler, the Antichrist. While Israel is enjoying its peace under the guaranteed security treaty with the Antichrist, Russia and a group of Islamic allies, including Iran, will attempt a final bid for power in the Middle East, but their armies will be supernaturally destroyed in the land of Israel (Ezekiel 38–39). At this point, the balance of power will swing decisively to the world’s new strongman.

**THE THREE-AND-A-HALF-YEAR WORLD EMPIRE OF ANTICHRIST**

As Satan’s man of the hour, the Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel and attempt to destroy the Jewish people. The last half of the seven-year Tribulation, the Antichrist will rule the world politically, economically, and religiously. The entire world will give allegiance to him or suffer persecution and death (Revelation 13).
the custom of the Roman emperors, he will deify himself and command the worship of the world.

THE ROAD TO ARMAGEDDON

The time of Tribulation will climax with a world war of unparalleled proportions. Hundreds of millions of men will be involved in a gigantic world power struggle centered in Israel (Revelation 14:19-20; 16:12-16; 19:19-21). The tiny land of Israel will become the stage for the greatest war of history. This war is not the same as the Battle of Gog and Magog described in Ezekiel 38–39 that will occur more than three and a half years earlier.

Great armies from all over the world will flood to Israel for one final conflagration. Locked in this deadly struggle, millions will perish in the greatest war of all history. The Bible calls this final conflict the War or Campaign of Armageddon. The word Armageddon comes from the Hebrew word Har-mageddon (mount Megiddo) which refers to a small hill in northern Israel that overlooks the expansive Valley of Megiddo where the troops will muster.

Before the war is finally finished and the victor declared, Jesus Christ will return to earth in power and glory from heaven. His coming will be accompanied by millions of angels and raptured Christians. It is vividly described in Revelation 19:11-21. Coming as the King of kings and Lord of lords, He will judge the world, destroy the gathered armies, and usher in His own kingdom of
peace, prosperity, and righteousness on earth that will last for 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-6).

As we will see, the Bible doesn’t answer every question we have or give us every detail about the future, but it does provide the template of where we’re headed. The Bible is a revelation of the past, present, and future—not just of individuals but also of nations and the movements of history. It is the prism through which we can see what’s coming and make sense of what’s happening today. Let’s begin our examination of current events and the history leading up to them through this prism and discover what it tells us about the present conflict and where it’s ultimately headed.